

I-405 Executive Committee Meeting

April 30, 2003

Meeting Summary

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman George Kargianis called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. He noted the crucial role played by Senator Horn in securing state funding for transportation and for I-405.

He turned the meeting over to Senator Horn to touch on key accomplishments. Senator Horn noted that 6140 to set up RTID passed in one year, a surprisingly fast approval. After the failure of ref. 51 people said it would be hard to pass anything in Olympia. We knew anything we came up with had to be different from r-51, had to do something for the quality of life and be specific, and it has to do something for our economy. Horn noted that Boeing's Watt noted this funding was an important element in their own thinking.

We set up what they call the nickel fund. He noted the role of the LEAP committee, and his hope that we will soon see projects underway from the new gas tax, from RTID, and from existing authorized funds.

The new gas tax takes care of the high accident area projects for the 36 counties not covered by RTID. The three county area will receive the bulk of the funds.

Of the \$4.2 billion bill, \$485 M was allocated to the I-405 project, but Horn noted that there also was money funding work on SR167 and to the north. (get name). The legislature also passed a bonding bill, an optional sales tax by region or county. There also was legislation passed that says money raised in a county must be spent within it. We also passed funding to continue RTID work (\$3 million), as well as \$5 million for independent cost estimates. The State also funded \$10 m for an environmental assessment along I-5 (confirm) from Tukwila to northgate, and money to fund planning effort for the DOT.

Dave Dye added his thanks to Senator Horn for his leadership on this project. Dye noted the importance of identifying schedules for all projects. Dye noted that WSDOT will work two efforts simultaneously-RTID, as well as working on the three specific projects funded by the legislature.

The chair then asked for public comment (none provided).

Chair Kargianis turned the meeting over to Mr. Stone to review the Agenda for today:

Funding
Texas Tale
Managed Lanes Update
Option C Refinements.

Mr. Stone noted that there would be elements of the handouts that would not be covered to save time, but that he would focus on option C refinements today.

Stone noted the three areas covered by the new state legislative funding. He noted that a business plan is being developed to develop the three projects, and how they fit into the RTID process. In response to a questions Stone noted that the 5% design effort works with RTID and various projects..

David Dye noted that the I-5 project reviews the infrastructure requirements, lane continuity issues, and finally what are the main issues associated with travel demand. This project will be linked to review of the 405 project as demand and travel is linked between the two corridors. In general, we have 520 money , I-5 money, planning money, I-90 HOV/transit operation. The monies help us continue moving forward, even if we are not all the way there.

Rosemary Ives noted the need to provide a 520/405 interchange for HOV. She noted that there have to be incentives to use HOV lanes, and noted the importance of this interchange.

Horn noted that SR167 has a record of decision, where we don't have it for AWV or 520, and that affects these other projects.

Stone returned to the agenda and explained the decision process we are working on, noting how our work feeds into a final plan and the RTID draft plan. He noted the Funding and Phasing Committee is scheduled for May 5.

He explained the operations decision tree and how today's discussion focuses on whether the project uses a 1 HOV and four general purpose lanes, or 2 managed lanes and three general purpose lanes. Stone turned the presentation over to Ed Reagan.

Reagan described the I-10 Katy Highway works, and how it uses managed lanes and an innovative financing solution. I-10 runs through Houston, with a total of 11 miles of To\ll Road, and Metro (the transit operator). Tolls used to pay a portion of the project. It replaced the reversible lanes.

The federal value price exemption under current law, which probably will change, prohibits the placement of tolls on interstate highways. The exemptions are for demonstration programs, such as value pricing.

The toll road contributed \$250 million to be paid from the tolls. Metro has been promised 25% of the available capacity for transit and HOV3. They also had a guarantee that the lanes would operate at 60 MPH during peak periods. This gave transit free roads with guaranteed speed, in exchange for sharing the road.

Horn noted his concern about whether managed lane (tolling) success is not dependent on the failure of GP lanes? Reagan noted that the 1-15 experience noted that public strongly supported the relief valve benefit of managed lanes.

Reagan noted that tolling allows you to better manage the lanes in total.

Kargianis noted the need to look at short term and long term effects of using managed lanes on gp performance.

Rosemary Ives noted that from her recent trip to China, in meeting with transportation staff in Shaing Hi, a city of 30 million people, she was struck by the question of what we really know about trips today on 405, and trips in the future. China has made a decision that people will use subways and mass transit in the future, with cheap taxis everywhere for short trips.

David Dye suggested we reframe the issues of managed lanes versus free lanes. He noted that the issue is how to work with both, how to make them both worked. He noted that initially the operation of an expanded highway where both gp and managed lanes are provided, we can move more vehicles through time. At issue is whether in 15 years we are going to be reviewing this again to add three more lanes, which he noted we probably are not.

Sonny Putter said we see two policy poles, one is the Rosemarie Ives approach of more mass transit, and reliance on managed lanes, and then there is the Jim Horn question of whether we design GP lanes for failure. Putter noted that there must be a balance to maximize the throughput. There has to be a maximum efficiency point of the total system.

Reagan noted that in Texas they didn't have the money to do the preferred option. So they looked at the managed lane alternative that helped pay for the upgrade. He noted that if we make GP improvements, what happens if they fill up in the future and you're where you were originally. Do you want to provide relief valves?

Reagan noted how toll rate and operations work on H-10, where they chose to maximize tolls. Traditionally there is less revenue initially, and then it ramps up.

In Dallas, the LBJ freeway will use managed lanes as the preferred alternative. It has several rail connections, and it

What about the nature of trips in the 12 mile segment in Houston. Reagan noted that along 405, we have two sets of patterns (north and south of Bellevue coming into Bellevue). In Houston, and others, the freeways are directional in nature. We may have shorter trip lengths along 405.

Don Samdahl then reviewed HOV operational issues. He reviewed the guiding principles of managed lanes that were approved almost a year ago. Don reviewed how the current HOV designations break down within three years during the peak periods. These lanes

will be overloaded with vehicles traveling at less than 45 mph. By 2020 the entire corridor will be overloaded with HOV2s during peak periods.

If we go to the HOV3 definition, the HOV lanes work well, but we are using less than 50% of their capacity, and it raises the question of whether it would optimize the system, creating the empty lane syndrome.

We then looked at the option of two managed lanes as a solution. We found that in the year 2014, some sections of the corridor would operate at 25% of its capacity during peak periods with a two lane managed lane facility, with other sections that operate at 50% of capacity, and others that would operate at 75% of capacity. This would mean that we would have excess capacity to allow others to use it.

This leads us into the question of how to think about pricing managed lanes.

Ives asked why not 2 HOV and one managed lane? Also, what if Boeing stays, and they decide to build the new plane in Everett-how will it affect 405? WSDOT will come back to these.

Reagan reviewed preliminary revenue assessments for 1 plus 4 gp, with HOV3+ free, 2 plus 3 lanes with HOV3+, as well as 2 plus 3 gp lanes, with HOV 2+ free.

He reviewed that tolling would differ with the direction people are traveling to and from Bellevue, based on traffic volumes. He noted how different rates might work under each of the three options.

He noted an average tolling rate if we averaged all three scenarios together, to get a quick snapshot of tolls charged, using an 8 to 10 mile trip. He reviewed the annual revenue forecasts, noting that the 1 managed lane plus 4 GP provides slightly more revenue with HOV3 traveling in the lane free, than we would receive under the 2 managed lane plus 3 GP lanes, with HOV 2 users traveling free.

Reagan noted the preliminary bonding capacity associated with each of the three options.

Horn asked whether the tolls could pay for GP lanes? Reagan noted that that was a decision separate from the tolling.

Putter asked if the policy goal to maximize tolls or throughput. Dey and George said throughput is the leading candidate. Putter noted the question as it relates to ensuring the whole system work.

Reagan noted that the Federal Administration has a proposal for reauthorization that includes proposed changes to use of HOV lanes to allow SOVs to use them as tolled lanes.

Stone returned to the question of how do we optimize the system, and the specific options under review. He reviewed the initial C1 option without managed lanes, and how it would work to include gp and multi-modal capabilities, using the HOV3+ assumption. This option would use a 4 foot buffer

C1 with managed lane uses the same lane configuration, but using two managed lanes, with a HOV2+ designation. He noted how the traffic sheds work coming into Bellevue from the north and south and distributing out.

C2 option costs \$500 million less by eliminating freeway to freeway ramps, Kirkland ramps, and some freeway ramps in S. Renton. In December we went to fudnig and phasing to review c3 at 3.2 bil, but it was dropped as it did not respond to committee interests of a ten year program.

C2 with managed lanes, comes in at \$3.7 billion, with shorter _____ .

Stone noted that wSDOT then reviewed prior alternatives, and the managed system, and how we could separate managed lanes from the other lanes. Stone reviewed problems with Factoria interchange, and how wsdot has already widened these bridges. He explained a new concept of adding a third bridge to build in new capacity. He noted how this would then permit two managed lanes could come all the way into Bellevue, and with possible direct new ramps in Bellevue. He explained how a new proposl, c4, would provide direct access ramps at both Main and NE12th street. (Stone explained that the interchange at 520 was reviewed, but at over a billion dollars, it was beyond the cost we could include in this proposal). However, interchanges at 520 and I-90 could be added in later.

Stone then described how this new proposal would permit two managed lanes through the entire corridor. He explained how we could develop 21 continuous managed lanes, which offers a better story to tell. He reviewed how these lanes would work and look, and noted that southern and northern ends of the corridor are proposed to include a single managed lane north of 522, and south of sr167.

Stone explained how the new proposed direct access ramps and slip ramps would work along the corridor, showing examples of how it might work. Finally, Stone reviewed how BRT stations would work along the corridor.

Stone noted these new proposed improvements, described as C4, would cost between 4.2 and 4.4 billion. This is a little more than described before. He noted that he believes the \$4.4 bil package is a better product, and asked the committee for policy direction on this alternative.

Stone reviewed federal funding for the project, noting that total funding is estimated \$3.8 to \$4.9 billion. And how this will be reviewed in more detail at the funding and phasing committee on Monday.

Two policy directions from committee after eis:

Allow a 4 foot buffer

Look at a regional body for pricing.??

Goerge asked the question could we convert a lane after congestion gets worse? Stone said that would be difficult, that is we probably need to decide whether we have one or two lanes.

Aubrey asked if we could do the program could work with much less money. The issue, stone responded, comes back to do we do worst first, or something that benedfits the entire corridor.

Connie thanked WSDOT for listening, and that the new package really addresses the problem.

That the public is looking for, a complete solution, with throughpp

for once we are talking about 21 miles orf continuous improvements, that solves the issujes of people coming into and out of Bellevue and along

Mcbride seconded connie's comments, that this was an innovative solution, that it will really mean something for brt, and her excitement about how the numbers flesh out.

Stone commented that 82,000 vehicle hours saved is three times the savings of any other rtid project proposal, and that that was before c4. We expect to come back with more infol.

Putter-will we have info that shows how we maximize throughput by area at the next session? He would like info that shows how we can better utilize the highway. What is the highest level of optimization we can achieve under the different options at the best cost? If we don't improve the performance of the system overall, whether it's the cheapest or not, we will not maximize

George seconded sonny's comments, noting that we buy into the vision of 21 continuous miles of imprvoeements, and that revenue is not the driving factor.

Stone noted he woujld come back with answers to this at the next committee meeting.

Stone asked the committee if we should provide some public input on these alternatives, before the June meeting.

Sonny was concerned about not getting out to the public in advance of having a better proposal to put before the public. His concern was that the new information is extremely complex and he didn't want to get too far out in front of the committee before

it had had a chance to come up with a well thought out approach that could be then better understood by the public.

Rosemarie suggested we talk with Redmond tma guy to get some feedback.